NBC NEWS - STS 41-C LAUNCH (4-6-1984)

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From April 6th, 1984 NBC NEWS Coverage of the STS-41-C Launch.
The 11th Space Shuttle Launch occurred at 8:58 A.M E.T

STS-41-C CREW:
Commander: Robert L. Crippen
Pilot: Francis R. 'Dick' Scobee
Mission Specialist 1:Terry J. Hart
Mission Specialist 2:James D. A. van Hoften
Mission Specialist 3:George D. Nelson

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well aboard the space shuttle challenger launch is set now for a little under two hours from now and you will see it live today friday april the 6th 1984 from nbc news this is today with bryant gumbel and james hawley and good morning from new york i'm jane pauley with john palmer who is sitting in uh for bryant who has one more week of vacation next week you're going to be back over at the news now yes but i've enjoyed this week i really have well you've got a busy day to finish it up we do three hours today you bet this is a special edition to cover the launch live and we will stay with you until all as well and as i said we are just about two hours away from launch and also coming up today we have some interesting interviews secretary of state george schultz first off he talks about the russians also of course about central america and labor secretary ray donovan talks about unemployment where that's going and mike jensen shows you how the crime syndicate figures are laundering money and we'll hear more from candice bergen we'll get some more laughs from robin williams and hear how kenny rogers plans to collect canned food for the needy let's get this day started with bob jameson at the news desk bob morning thank you jane good morning the space shuttle challenger and the rocket that will carry it into space are fueled and ready for blast off in a little less than two hours the countdown proceeded smoothly through the night for the mission one of the shuttle's most challenging to capture and repair a broken satellite the latest from science correspondent bob bizzell who is standing by at cape canaveral good morning bob bob good morning everything as you say is just fine it's a beautiful day here on the east coast of central florida no problems with the weather there was some concern during the night that the winds might be too strong but they are not now it's a calm day out at the launch pad in what's called the white room which is where the hatch is where the asteroid all five astronauts just went in within the last half hour there you see technicians who are making the final preparations to close the door the launch is set for 8 58 a.m eastern time they have what's called a

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time they have what's called a window of 7 minutes and 45 seconds they have that much extra time to take off it's interesting that during the preparations for this launch they had thought it would be two minutes longer but they discovered if they launched in those last two minutes they might come too close to the soyuz spacecraft that's up there right now with the indian on board but other than that there are nothing nothing that's even conceivably a problem right now everything going very well for this mission which nasa says will be its most challenging yet bob bob thank you an hour no problems have developed in the preparations for this country's 11th shuttle flight the shuttle at its rocket are on the launching pad at cape canaveral the vehicle will carry a five-man crew on an ambitious mission that calls for repairing a disabled satellite and the launching of another satellite filled with scientific equipment and weighing 11 tons back on her tasks ever attempted in orbit during the last space shuttle flight the so-called buck rogers jet backpacks the man maneuvering units captured the world's attention as they transformed astronauts into individual human satellites on this mission the units will fly again as nasa plans the most ambitious project so far attempted with the space shuttle using the backpacks an astronaut will travel out from the shuttle and capture a broken scientific satellite the satellite is called solar max because it was launched to observe the maximum period of solar flare activity several years ago the shuttle will then grab the satellite with its robot arm and the astronauts will try to replace the parts of the satellite which have not worked since it was first launched if all that works the crew will then grab the satellite with the robot arm again and release it back into orbit so that it can begin the scientific observations which it was supposed to conduct when it was first launched the crew for this 11th flight of the shuttle commander robert crippen making his third shuttle flight pilot dick scobee whose previous duties

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pilot dick scobee whose previous duties included commentary on the today program during the sixth shuttle flight and mission specialist terry hart i'm about ready to jump out of my skin i'm so excited and the two men who will fly the backpacks james van hoffen known to his colleagues as ox and george nelson called pinky who will be the one to try to capture the broken satellites i'm really looking forward to it i think it's going to be about as much fun as i've ever had nelson and van hoffman have trained for their work on the damaged satellite by wearing their spacesuits in water tanks which simulate weightlessness and on a computer-operated system at the martin marietta corporation which simulates the flight of the jet backpacks this is a full-scale model of the solar max satellite when nelson hooks up with it it will be rotating at that speed one of the biggest problems for nelson will be to hook up with the satellite while it is rotating and to avoid colliding with the huge solar panels but after hundreds of hours of training the astronauts are confident jane i've tried to a serious investigative report to try to find out how george nelson got the nickname pinky it turns out he doesn't even know he says his father just gave it to him well how did the other guy get ox well ox was the name that he got in the navy he's a very large man he's very tall so his colleagues in the navy started calling a box he's not true mad either well we're looking forward to um 8 58 eastern time is the official launch everything underway and on schedule yes oh absolutely no problems the weather is beautiful it's a little bit chilly as you see i have a sweater on but other than that it's no problems the chilliness won't stop the launch the winds are no problem no mechanical difficulties we're going to go at 8 58. and bob will be back to you for that thank you metal challengers are set to lift off within the half hour the countdown has gone without a hitch for this the most ambitious shuttle mission yet science correspondent robert bazel is at cape canaveral good morning bob bob good morning as you say there are no problems whatsoever with either the space shuttle or with the weather a few minutes ago nasa

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with the weather a few minutes ago nasa test director bob webster pulled all his assistants they said everything was fine uh webster gave that information to bob crippen the commander and told crippen that since this is his third flight if he makes any more they're gonna have to bronze his seat and put it in his living room grip and laugh that's the kind of banner that goes on before a good mission looks like this is a good mission 8 58 eastern time bob bob thank you we're going to rejoin science correspondent robert bazelle at cape canaveral now and with him is a man who will call a veteran good morning again bob good morning jane with me is colonel robert overmeyer of the united states marine corps you want to make sure that we mention the marines and let's he's one of the but he's been there before it's very important to have colonel overbought with us he was the pilot on the fifth space shuttle mission which went up in november 1982 he will be the commander of a space shuttle mission that goes up in november of this year how's the countdown going this morning chris bob the countdown is going extremely well we've had very few glitches and everything looks like it's really ready to go i'm sure there's a lot of excitement on the flight deck and i'm sure the old pro bob crippen is ready to go with it so well one of the things that's maybe a little bit even difficult for us to cover it now is that it all seems to be so easy everything seems to be working so well now we're running out of things to say well the shuttle system itself is behaving very well and the the orbiter and all the external parts are just working so well that there's really nothing to report and the weather's beautiful we're ready for a spectacular launch we should point out that we're at the point in the countdown now where just a few minutes ago they resumed the actual count at t minus nine and that means that from now on they continue counting and accounting is being run by a computer called the ground launch sequencer and unless there's some major problem it will just go automatically down to a lift at eight fifty eight janet uh bob i'm wondering um you're saying that everything goes so well these days i'm wondering however if nasa isn't under a little pressure to show the world they can do after that murphy's mission in february well that's a good point do you think that there's more pressure on this mission to capture the solar max satellite and

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capture the solar max satellite and repair it and do perhaps a real spectacular job after those rocket failures that kind of tarnished the image of everything working well the last time well i i don't think there's any additional pressure we put a lot of pressure on ourselves because we want a successful mission we promised that this shuttle could do this capability or in the mid 70s and we're really proving it and bringing it to fruition so yes we really put a lot of pressure on ourself i don't think that mission problems in the previous mission have any putting additional pressure but we're putting a lot of pressure on itself because we want to do good now we're talking before about when you were sitting up there a little while a year and a half ago and you were sitting in the pilot's seat you would think that this moment just a just before it's about to happen or is do you think the dick scoby is really anxious right now i suspect that t-minus six is when dick's gonna heartbeat will probably raise the highest because at that point he's gonna be worried about getting those apu started after that he just relax and let the ignition happen well it looks like it's going to happen soon jane we'll be right back to you bob don't you go away after a message for a startup back to the cape turning over to bob bizzell it's all yours and nasa's bob wells nasa is doing its part i hope i do mine as well jane everything is going very well uh with me again is colonel robert overmar of the marine corps astronaut himself no problem still everything's just absolutely smooth we've got the auxiliary power units those very important hydraulic motors running and everything is just perking along just as good as we could possibly want it well we have got to a situation now where we're looking like uh space shuttle launches going into space is in fact almost as routine as a trip uh in trip on a on an airplane if we look at the picture now we see that the rocket the exhaust they're going to be turned on in a few minutes now that's the voice of hugh harris over here in the background who is the head of public affairs here at the kennedy space center as we've mentioned before this mission of the space shuttle will try what has

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of the space shuttle will try what has been one of the most ambitious projects ever attempted in orbit to capture and repair a broken scientific satellite that's going to happen on sunday morning and that should provide quite a show we'll be covering that live on nbc you see the top there the external fuel tank which is that orange body they've taken away the arm it's sitting there you see the mist coming off of it from the hydrogen and oxygen that provides the fuel one of the key moments to watch for during the launch is at t minus 31 seconds because at that point the computers on board take over and that really indicates that everything's okay it's very hard to get to stop after t minus 31. it's not impossible but it could happen how are you starting to feel a little bit excited yourself right now with your friends out there you've got to be excited you're always excited here whenever whenever there's a launch bob it's just a natural thing isn't it oh i'm even excited and one of the things is we're about to feel that great force of all that it's 45 seconds it'll take a few seconds for the sound to come over to us meanwhile the spaceship should have cleared the tower and be on the way downrange before we ever get the sound here one of the things just before we turn it over to mission control that's always fascinating to me is that we're three and a half miles where we're standing here from the launch site and those men are out there three and a half miles for us there's nobody closer they're all by themselves out there do you ever think about that when you were sitting up there naturally you think about that because the reason why you're three and a half miles away in case we have any problem we've got to make sure that all the people are protected away from it spacecraft thank you i think we're going to turn it over now and we'll just listen to hugh harris the voice of mission control as he counts down the last minute to the 11th launch of the space shuttle one minute and counting the firing system for the sound suppression water system is armed the hydrogen igniters under the orbiter's engines have been armed these devices assure that any hydrogen flowing through the engines does not accumulate

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accumulate t minus 45 seconds just 14 seconds away from switching command to the countdown to the onboard computers p minus 35 seconds the gox bent arm fully retracted and we're switching command to the onboard computers the srb hydraulic power units have started t minus 20 seconds t minus 17 16 15 13 12 11 10. we are go for main engine start 8 7 6 we have main engine start 3 2 1 solid motor ignition and lift off lift off a challenger in the first flight to repair a satellite in space we have cleared the tower

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up altitude uh 10.5 nautical miles velocity 3 200 feet per second distance downrange seven nautical miles uh engine performance continues nominal apu speeds uh temperatures and pressure pressures all look good velocity 4000 feet per second altitude 15 16 nautical miles distance down range 11 nautical miles standing by for a moment here we should have the separation of the solid rocket booster engines we have a very good picture of it today because it's such a clear day very clear day in about two minutes it'll be uh the pressure chamber pressure will be down with less than 50 and they'll uh blast off from the uh external tank they'll separate right right right here we go and those two external solid rocket boosters fall into the ocean where they're going to be about 142 miles down range bob and we'll go out and retrieve them and reload those casings for a future flight now one of the things that's interesting about this fight is they're having what nasa calls direct orbital insertion uh which is a complicated thing for saying that they fire the engines a little bit longer this time and doesn't that mean that the external tank that huge orange thing that we see that's going to be falling in a different place this time that's right it'll be impacting an area in the south pacific south of hawaii as compared to the indian ocean where we've impacted it on previous missions of course we really don't think much of the tank comes through the atmosphere most of it burns up on the way down so there's no danger to the people in hawaii the impact point is well off of the land mass of hawaii there's no danger to hawaii at all obviously uh challenger can still make it so transatlantic i think what we're going to do now is uh we've got a beautiful picture of it going far off into space because it's such a poor day here but it was such a spectacular perfect launch we're going to take a look at it again colonel robert meyer and maybe you can tell us while we take a look at it what we're seeing here here we go on

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what we're seeing here here we go on well at t-minus six seconds we're getting the main engine ignition they build up and we when we check that the thrust comes up to the proper level 100 percent thrust will then cut in the solids which they just did there's a real boot at that time the whole spacecraft takes a big crushing blow and you really vibrate a bit and off you go and it's a real kick at that point what kind of news we are hearing from the astronauts themselves and how well they're doing up there uh incidentally with uh with this new uh flight plan with going directly into orbit the big external tank is going to drop off somewhere around hawaii it's usually in the indian ocean but that's a little bit different path right now they obviously had to be concerned about where it was going to go so it didn't it breaks up at the atmosphere they don't want it to come down and land anywhere okay right now a challenger is going out over the atlantic ocean it's not yet over the coast of africa it is reaching there and when they get there and when they get in orbit they will begin a very busy mission science editor jules bergman is going to tell us a little bit about what this mission is all the about purpose of this mission the rescue and repair of the solar maximum satellite and unmanned spacecraft launched four years ago it's rolling uselessly in orbit now after its control devices malfunctioned will first rendezvous alongside the crippled solar max then using the backpacks flown on the last mission astronaut pinkie nelson will dock with a solar max to stop its rotation then challenger moves in close and its remote arm will grab the satellite to bring it back to the shuttle's cargo bay there nelson and astronaut jim van hoften will do the repair job on flight day six the shuttle will carry solar max to a higher orbit and release it so that it can resume its valuable scientific research if the astronauts can't fix it they'll bring the satellite back to earth this mission proving the shuttle's ability to retrieve and repair satellites a major step in developing america's future in space

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future in space thanks jules we are looking now at a picture of mission control in houston they of course are now taking charge of challenger uh once it leaves the launch pad it goes to houston florida no longer has control uh gentlemen gene jules story uh how are we hearing that everything is going so far uh apparently the solid rockets were low on thrust but most of the negative amount of thrust if you will was made up by the liquids so at this point the mission appears to be going super i mean it's going very well we just got an indication they have two engine capability now that means they can fly in orbit on on two engines should they lose one certainly not that that's not a probability at this time story what do you think's going on up there yeah they just passed by where they can get to orbit on one engine so that's what we're doing is counting the milestones we want to get into space you can see how quickly things are happening here lynn and i know the people at mission control back here in houston are are ready to take on the challenge of this mission story would you rather be up there than down here i'm sorry i just asked the storyline if you'd rather be up there than down here now you didn't ask your guys well of course they have something else to do today it's not just a solar max as you know it's um there's another satellite that they're going to deploy today it's a an experimental type science satellite it's going to be left up there for almost a year it's not nearly as exciting as the solar max repair mission but it is part of what the shuttle is all about there are some 50-some experiments riding on that and they're going to be up there exposed to the radiation of space for almost a year and then brought back here to earth to see how it's doing then we're near main engine cut off at this time just a few seconds i believe okay we have about up at about 26.50 [Applause] roger that sounds great crap uh miko right on time standing by now to

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uh miko right on time standing by now to get off the external tank [Applause] roger separation mission trainer bob crippen uh confirming uh external tank separation nominal well that is good news mission is nominal they cut off the main engines on time they are very uh shortly going to dump that external tank and then they can get down to work that by the way that satellite they're going to deploy is tomorrow not later today for a shutdown of apus and our report go [Applause] let's take a look at that satellite which i was just describing it is known as the ldap which actually stands for long duration exposure facility there's a picture of it it has 12 sides it's a kind of a grid it fills up about half of the cargo bay it's shaped as big big as a bus and it will get deployed by the remote arm and as i say just left out there in space for almost a year it will be picked up by i believe next february by another shuttle mission brought back down to earth and then the scientists whose experiments are riding in trays in between those grids that you see the scientists will be able to look at those experiments and see how they have fared after all that exposure to space this is the first time they'll be able to do that sort of thing they not only pick up deliver and will repair but they're going to leave something there and go back and get it later on um story the shuttle is really expanding its capabilities with this mission is it not it sure is there's a lot of firsts uh going on up to 250 miles uh apogee on launch and uh the l there for the long duration exposure facility and the retrieval of that gives a long duration of exposure to the space environment and of course the solar max repair yes and uh story eldef uh tests many of the materials needed for the future space station uh from radiation uh testing to uh human testing of materials

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testing to uh human testing of materials the thermal environment lynn you know we've had a lot of uh space spectaculars in the past going back many many years and uh perhaps as recent as the last space flight in the last space walk which truly wasn't spectacular but we now we've talked about it before but i think we in this country with our space program are truly now getting down to work and i think the things you're seeing here happen in the next several days are going to have ramifications not just for the space program but for the entire industrial community of of this nation and perhaps this world i'm i'm truly excited about this mission gina and jules and story i know that all of you are very jealous of what pinky nelson is going to get to do up there and i'll say it again i also know that most of the astronaut corps is exceedingly jealous this is the mission they've all dreamed of going out there putting on that backpack flying out to the satellite he's going to picky nelson's going to be a satellite himself for a few minutes as he rotates around the earth waiting to be picked up put in the cargo bay and then they will start to make their repairs another historic moment this is general abramson the associate administrator of nasa's last mission as that he is going on of course to be president reagan's uh stars are as they say he says he's leaving this post at the end of this mission with very mixed feelings he's enjoyed it here too so space shuttle challenger is in orbit is about to start its business we will have full reports this evening on abc's world news tonight we will of course keep you posted as events happen and sunday morning please be sure to tune in we are going to have live coverage of that historic repair of the satellite in space for all of us here at abc news i'm lynn sharer in florida have a nice day new challenge in space this has been a special events presentation of abc news

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